AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as indicated below. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A content usage control apparatus comprising:

acquisition means for acquiring first user identification information [[for]] identifying a first user requesting use of content;

registration means for registering the first user identification information in a database, and for subsequently registering a second user requesting use of the content by replacing the first user identification information in the database with second user identification information identifying the to register a second user requesting use of the content;

change limitation means for preventing the registration means from further replacing the second user identification information in the database in accordance with a limitation on replacing user identification information;

limitation modifying means for modifying the limitation on replacing user identification information; and

usage control means for, in response to the request for use of the content issued by the second user, determining whether the use of the content is allowed on the basis of whether the second user identification information is currently registered in the database.

2. (Previously Presented) A content usage control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the registration means performs registration in response to a request issued by the first user.

3. (Previously Presented) A content usage control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the registration means performs new registration only when a current number of registrations is smaller than a predetermined maximum allowable number of registrations.

4. (Previously Presented) A content usage control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the registration means stores, together with the first user identification information, an invalidation flag for controlling provision of a service to the first user; and

the usage control means limits the use of the content by the first user if the invalidation flag associated with the first user is set.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Previously Presented) A content usage control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the limitation is a maximum number of times user identification information can be replaced.

7. (Previously Presented) A content usage control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the limitation is a predetermined amount of time that must expire between replacing user identification information.

8. (Previously Presented) A content usage control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein when the registered first user identification information is replaced with the second user identification information, the change limitation means requests the second user to perform a particular operation.

9. (Previously Presented) A content usage control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein when the registered first user identification information is replaced with the second user identification information, the change limitation means requests submission of change permission information from the second user.

10. (Previously Presented) A content usage control apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the change limitation means charges fees for changing the maximum number of times user identification information can be replaced.

11. (Previously Presented) A content usage control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein when the limitation on replacing user information is modified the change limitation means requests submission of change permission information from a different apparatus or a manager.

12. (Currently Amended) A content usage control method comprising:

acquiring first user identification information [[for]] identifying a first user requesting use of content;

registering the first user identification information in a database and subsequently registering a second user requesting use of the content by[[;]] replacing the first user identification information in the database with second user identification information identifying the to register a second user requesting use of the content;

preventing further replacement of the registered second user identification in the database information in accordance with a limitation on replacing user identification information;

modifying the limitation on replacing user identification information; and

in response to the request for use of the content issued by the second user,

determining whether the use of the content is allowed on the basis of whether the second user identification information is currently registered in the database.

13. (Previously Presented) A content usage control method according to claim 12, wherein registration is performed in response to a request issued by the first user.

14. (Previously Presented) A content usage control method according to claim 12, wherein new registration is performed only when a current number of registrations is smaller than a predetermined maximum allowable number of registrations.

15. (Previously Presented) A content usage control method according to claim 12, wherein an invalidation flag for controlling provision of a service to the first user is stored together with the first user identification information; and

the use of the content by the first user is limited, if the invalidation flag associated with the first user is set.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Previously Presented) A content usage control method according to claim 12, wherein the limitation is a maximum number of times user identification information can be replaced.

18. (Previously Presented) A content usage control method according to claim 12, wherein the limitation is a predetermined amount of time that must expire between replacing user identification information.

19. (Previously Presented) A content usage control method according to claim 12, wherein when the registered first user identification information is replaced with the second user identification information for a second client, the second user is requested to perform a particular operation.

20. (Previously Presented) A content usage control method according to claim 12, wherein, when the registered first user identification information is replaced with the second user identification information, submission of change permission information is requested from the second user.

21. (Previously Presented) A content usage control method according to claim 17, further comprising charging fees for changing the maximum number of times user identification information can be replaced.

22. (Previously Presented) A content usage control method according to claim 12, wherein when the limitation on replacing user information is modified, submission of change permission information is requested from a different apparatus or a manager.

23. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable storage medium containing processor readable instructions for causing a processor to execute a method comprising:

acquiring first user identification information [[for]] identifying a first user requesting use of content;

registering the first user identification information in a database and subsequently registering a second user requesting use of the content by[[;]] replacing the first user identification information in the database with second user identification information identifying the to register a second user requesting use of the content;

preventing further replacement of the registered second user identification in the database information in accordance with a limitation on replacing user identification information;

modifying the limitation on replacing user identification information; and

in response to the request for use of the content issued by the second user,

determining whether the use of the content is allowed on the basis of whether the

second user identification information is currently registered in the database.